

A MESSAGE FROM . . .



BOB RILEY

Governor, State of Alabama

Hurricane Ivan hit Alabama on September 16, 2004, bringing with it vast damage and destruction, especially in the southwestern part of the state. According to assessments from the Alabama Forestry Commission, over half a billion dollars in timber damage occurred in the twelve counties hardest hit by the storm. The timber damaged by this storm is over twice the amount that was harvested last year in the assessment area. Almost three-fourths of this forestland was owned by private non-industrial landowners. For many of these landowners their financial stability and dreams for the future were swept away in a matter of minutes.

I have established the Alabama Forest Recovery Task Force (AFRTF) consisting of 30 members of state agencies, businesses, and the timber industry to facilitate salvage efforts, maximize the recovery of damaged timber, and limit the loss of timber of forest landowners. The AFRTF will develop plans to move storm-damaged timber to wood storage facilities

and work with forest landowners to minimize their losses due to the storm.

Although hit hard by Hurricane Ivan, the forestry community in Alabama will survive this setback and forestry will continue to play a vital role in Alabama's economy. ☛



TIMOTHY C. BOYCE

State Forester

In the weeks since Hurricane Ivan hit Alabama, the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) has been assessing the vast amount of timber damaged by the hurricane and is making plans for the salvage, restoration, and protection of Alabama's forest resource. The men and women who own timber that was damaged didn't just lose trees – for many of them they lost a long-term investment in their future. Their hopes for a college education for their children and grandchildren, and their dreams of comfort and security in their golden years vanished in almost the blink of an eye.

Although there is no way that we can completely eliminate losses of this magnitude, the Commission is working with the Governor's Forest Recovery Task Force to help these landowners rebuild their future and provide stability for the forest industry. Through this task force we are assisting landowners with salvage efforts as quickly as possible, helping

to find markets for the damaged wood, working to identify short- and long-term storage facilities for the timber, and helping to eliminate the barriers of safely harvesting and transporting this timber.

We are also making plans for long-range forest health problems such as the Southern Pine and Ips Beetles that target damaged timber, as well as the possibility of the introduction of unwanted invasive species in the area. Both now and in the future, the AFC is making arrangements for additional fire protection because of heavy fuel loading from the downed timber and forest debris, and we will be working with landowners to help them with fire protection and mitigation on their property.

The AFC has already held landowner meetings in the disaster areas to provide citizens and members of the forest industry with up-to-date information and to address concerns about timber salvage and forest health. A landowner help line was temporarily established, manned by trained forestry professionals to answer questions for landowners seeking assistance. Because of the important need to provide information to landowners now and in the future, the Commission will dedicate a large section of this issue of the magazine and issues in the upcoming year to disaster recovery.

There are many problems to address as a result of the damage from Hurricane Ivan. Some of them are being taken care of in the present; others will appear and have to be dealt with in the years to come. I can assure you that the Alabama Forestry Commission will remain dedicated to continuing our efforts to meet the needs of our forest landowners and resource managers. ☛